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THE RESEMBLANCE OF CONDENSATION, AN UNSTABLE LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE PAST AND PRESENT

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**THE RESEMBLANCE OF CONDENSATION,
AN UNSTABLE LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE PAST AND PRESENT**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Table Of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| List of Figures | iv |
| Abstract | v |
| Section I: The Ephemeral | 7 |
| Death | 7 |
| Nostalgia | 8 |
| Fluid State | 9 |
| Section II: The Visual | 11 |
| Perception | 12 |
| Reliability of Sight | 12 |
| The Fullness of the Void | 13 |
| Reflection, Time, & Water | 14 |
| Section III: Photography..... | 16 |
| Familiar, Fabricated Memories | 17 |
| Sontag | 17 |
| Two Dimensional & Three Dimensional | 18 |
| The Bridge | 19 |
| Slowing of Space | 20 |
| Section IV: Influences..... | 25 |
| Accumulation | 31 |
| Alteration | 31 |
| Capturing the Intangible | 37 |
| Bibliography | 45 |
| Curriculum Vitae..... | 46 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 . . . <i>The Picnic</i> . 44" w x 66" h. 2010. | 21 |
| Figure 2 . . . <i>Subjective</i> . 20" w x 34" h x 1/8". 2010. | 23 |
| Figure 3 . . . <i>Subjective</i> (detail). 20" w x 34" h x 1/8". 2010. | 24 |
| Figure 4 . . . <i>Standing Wall</i> . Larry Bell. 72" h x 72" w x 72" d. 1996. | 26 |
| Figure 5 . . . <i>Monument Odessa</i> . Christian Boltanski. 1990. | 30 |
| Figure 6 . . . <i>Drift</i> . 65" w x 48" h x 2" d. 2011. | 33 |
| Figure 7 . . . <i>Unknown from Archive I</i> . Anne Karin-Furunes. 63" h x 63" w. 2008. | 35 |
| Figure 8 . . . <i>After Image</i> (detail). 96" h x 48" w. 2011. | 36 |
| Figure 9 . . . <i>Untitled</i> . Robert Irwin. 54 in. 1969. | 38 |
| Figure 10 . . . <i>Fog Study 2</i> . 40" w x 30" h x 2" d. 2011. | 40 |
| Figure 11 . . . <i>Fog Study I</i> . 30" w x 40" h x 2" d. 2011. | 41 |
| Figure 12 . . . <i>Magic</i> . John McCracken. 104" h x 14 1/2" w x 17" d. 2008. | 43 |

Abstract

THE RESEMBLANCE OF CONDENSATION, AN UNSTABLE LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE PAST AND PRESENT

By Courtney Lane Dodd, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011.

Major Director: Jack Wax
Professor, Department of Craft/Material Studies

My thesis, *Condensation*, is centered on seeing and the limits of our perceptions. I'm interested in the psychological and emotional effects of visual phenomena and am exploring this area through glass's ability to reflect and obscure. I'm also experimenting with photography because it's simply documentation of reflection.

The solidity of reflection whether on glass, photography, or water is something that I'm questioning. The viewer assumes its physicality, but what we accept as conclusive is at times a construct. The palpability of reflection then disintegrates into the residue of sight.

I've been contemplating our eyes perceptual limits and what our mind sees in relation to what's shown. The act of seeing works as a catalyst to initiate doubt in our perceptions and reminds us of our eyes ability to reveal and conceal information. Visual shifting has led me to question the idea of boundaries in both physical and mental spheres.

Section I: The Ephemeral

Death

Some of my earliest memories involve death. As a child, I was consumed with the idea of dying and its looming possibility. Convinced that I would never live to graduate high school, I planted notes for my family to find after I'd passed. Each night, after postponing as long as I was allowed, my mother would put me to bed. Hesitantly my eyes would drop as I began to fall asleep, then faces would intrude upon my darkness. Their gazes would startle me awake, yet their stares were relentless even with wide eyes strained in the emptiness of my bedroom. Death knew well where I lived and visited often.

As with some people, my preoccupation with fatality did not fade with childhood. I have come to be acquainted with death over the years. It has lived in my shadow, always threatening to do more than linger. But what is death to a five year old? And more germane, what is it to an adult? It is the thing that makes my jaw tighten, strain, and grind my teeth together. It is the quiver in my lip and hotness in my throat. It is at my feet daily and the dance is to not trip into its depths. Death is the residue of the living, therefore all encompassing.

Death is complicated by ideas such as nostalgia, abandonment, fear, and instability. Louise Bourgeois, when talking about her mother's response to her semi-absent father said, "(My mother) did not fear being abandoned at all. She was not threatened, but it affected me. Ever since, I have been subject to the fear, the trauma of abandonment."¹ Death is the ultimate abandonment. Yet survivors have historically formed habits of erecting monuments, mummifying bodies, creating elaborate memorial services, and intentionally suffering to exhibit their sincerity in mourning, preserve the memory of the deceased, and attempt to dictate the customs of mortality.

Nostalgia

The resistance to death has long provoked individuals to take arms against fatality. A common weapon is nostalgia. Surrounded by objects and imagery from the past, my studio and home is overrun with items that would be described as nostalgic. The things that I choose to live within are not simply cameras, photos, and possessions. They are windows to an alternative epoch. They are the past that I will never recollect. They are my library of lives, moments, and pasts.

¹ Diehl, Carol. 39.

In the book “Grapes of Wrath” by John Steinbeck while traveling to California the characters are told there isn’t space for souvenirs such as letters and old hats. But the travelers replied, “the past would cry to them in coming days . . . ‘How can we live without our lives? How will we know it’s us without our past?’”² My own collection of found ephemera act as diaries attesting to the identity of strangers. Finding such items becomes an introduction to a person or generation. The accuracy of that history evolves into a secondary consideration to the connection. The rapport is always the priority.

Bourgeois was also quoted as saying that, “Everyday you have to abandon the past or accept it. If you cannot accept it, you become a sculptor.”³ There is a correlation between this idea and my choice to become a maker. Engrossed by impending death and attempting to preserve the transient, I must employ and resurrect objects of a former moment in an attempt to be acquainted with the present.

Fluid State

It is the residual film of yesterday that I find so compelling in discarded and forgotten objects. The presence of such a record is proof of a history and summons another time.

² Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. London: Heinemann, 1939. 76-79.

³ Diehl, Carol. 39.

These relics are the result of exchanges between everything that came into contact with them until now, each time resulting in the trade of a minute piece of one for the other, always relinquishing, always accumulating. Therefore, I believe that nothing is defined solely by the prescription of its own edges, but by everything in which it is surrounded. I envision the world as a porous space, a fluid state. It is by our own constructs that we have anchored our lives in “reality” and what we presently define as fact.

What we assume to be objective, to be flawless, is innately fallible. And because these feelings are so inherent they are rarely scrutinized. How we recognize and comprehend the world comes from experience, which is constructed through our senses. The reliability of our perceptions makes me skeptical, in particular that of one of our most dominant senses, sight.

Section II: The Visual

While reading *Cabinet* magazine, I came across a color article which discusses the color black in relation to sight.

The contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben, following Aristotle, remarked that the fact that we see darkness means that our eyes have not only the potential to see, but also the potential *not* to see. (If we had only the potential to see, we would never have the experience of not-seeing.) This twofold potential, to do and not to do, is not only a feature of our sight, Agamben argues; it is the essence of our humanity: The greatness—and also the abyss—of human potentiality is that it is first of all potential not to act, *potential for darkness*. Because we are capable of inaction, we know that we have the ability to act, and also the choice of whether to act or not. Black, the color of not seeing, not doing, is in that sense the color of freedom.⁴

⁴ La Farge, Paul. "Colors/ Black." *Cabinet Magazine* 36, Winter 2009 Accessed March 28, 2011.

Perception

This article points out the capability of seeing and of not seeing. It is this potential that speaks of decision making, perception, and environment that interests me. How we choose to see or absorb our surroundings is based on an intricate system of past and present variables. Our environment, status, gender, race, history, culture, and influences impart a type of selective viewing upon each of us in distinctive manners. The thought that seeing could be truly objective is then debunked. This in turn leads to the examination of sight and a myriad of inquiries.

Reliability of Sight

I am also interested in the psychological and emotional effects of shifting visual phenomena. I have been contemplating the perceptual limits of our eyes and what our mind sees in relation to what is being shown. The act of seeing works as a catalyst to initiate doubt in what the audience perceives and reminds us of our eyes innate ability to reveal, as well as, conceal information. The magic held in the perceptual shifting of a mundane object or experience fascinates me because of its capability to disregard established familiarities.

My interest in the ideas of perception and sight perhaps stem from of my curiosity about twins, siblings, and more elaborate ideas of metaphysics and the duplication of universes that house the same individual in different circumstances. My own vision can also be identified as the culprit for my explorations into the folly and perplexities of sight. Occasionally while reading, the page of a book will shift causing the positive to become negative and the words will dance in between unavailable to be read. This visual fallout most often occurs when I am tired and coerces me return to the page when my eyes are not so fatigued. This is a physical example of the unreliability on my vision, but I am interested in it on a more emotional and physiological level. If you fully rely on your glasses, what do you see in the mirror without them? I have asked several people and they talk about only seeing a shape or slight color. To have something so familiar become indistinguishable is personally really intriguing. Again, the notion of what we do and don't see arises.

The Fullness of the Void

Can we see what once existed? This query conforms to the same principles that I spoke about earlier of leaving an impression and taking a piece of all that surrounds you. Then I wonder, can we visually understand loss? What defines the borders of our senses and can one be felt through another? Again I begin to think about this notion of a porous system. I

am interested in the paradoxical concept that within a void lies depths of information and vice versa. Described as presence through absence, I have explored this within photography and sculpture.

Reflection, Time, & Water

Captivated by the similarities of glass, photography, and water, I find reflection to be both a physical and mental realm. (Although apparent in glass and water, reflection is also essential to photography, which simply acts as documentation of a reflection.) The solidity of reflection whether on glass, in photography, or on water is something that I have been questioning. The viewer assumes the physicality of the reflection, but again what we accept as conclusive is at times simply a construct. The palpability of the reflection then disintegrates into the residue of sight.

Recently, I've thought a lot about the depth of the definitions of death, of time, and of what we know to be solid and permeable. Making sense of intangible ideas through physical material has been something that I have relied on to grasp things beyond my full comprehension. I understand time and water to have many of the same qualities and are predictable, and unpredictable, in some of the same ways. In the book, Einstein's Dreams there is a quotation about their similarities

In this world, time is like a flow of water, occasionally displaced by a bit of debris, a passing breeze. Now and then, some cosmic disturbance will cause a rivulet of time to turn away from the mainstream, to make connection backstream. When this happens, birds, soil, people caught in the branching tributary find themselves suddenly carried to that past.⁵

Louise Bourgeois said that, “The limits of materials can be thought of as a metaphor for human relations.”⁶ I can not think of a more perfect metaphorical material to test than time. Each day we are linked to this material by a chain which shortens without our knowledge of its full length. Time is the material of all people.

All of the ideas that are circulating in my mind refer back to the cyclical, the ephemeral, death, perception, residue, the reliability of sight and the solidity of reality. They seem disconnected at first glance, but in the depths of their definitions there is a web of commonality. Perpetuated by one another, death is a result of the ephemeral and residue the result of death. In the complications of these ideas, questions are aroused regarding the fundamentals of vision. If the stability of sight comes into question, this can also become an investigation on how we define ourselves and where we exist.

⁵ Lightman, Alan P. *Einstein's Dreams*. Warner Books ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993. 10.

⁶ Diehl, Carol. 39.

Section III: Photography

Photographs have long been used as documentation of “reality.” They have been presented as fact, evidence, and history. People have, at times, turned to cameras to authenticate a moment. Yet in the instant they raise the lens, objectification falls to the wayside with the snap of the shutter. The edges of the frame are placed around the subject and that which falls outside the viewfinder is not recorded and therefore not taken into evidence. The concept of photography is just as porous as that of our reflection. Photography is a mirror that has been both honest and deceitful.

Although I know the depth of its subjectivity, I am consistently allured by photographs. The kinetic potential held in a still image is great in my mind. Though skewed, a picture can speak of a moment in time that, like the quotation on water, allows me to fold back upon myself. Images, especially those of another era, allow me to become familiar with things that I have never experienced physically. They are like books for me, they let my mind fill in the blanks, elaborate on the setting, and refine the narrative. I become emotionally connected to the image and somewhere subconsciously both of our presents collide.

Familiar, Fabricated Memories

Of course, not every photograph I come across holds my attention. Boxes with literally hundreds of plied paper mementos fill my studio and closets. Searching for an unspeakable whisper, I comb over and over them. Then suddenly, one in the pile of seven hundred introduces itself as a faded memory and my mind is filled with the history of the image. The truth of this history isn't relevant. The past that is constructed in my mind is personally authentic therefore it is authentic enough. Again, it is the exchange that matters most.

Sontag

Another person who has a great affiliation for photography is a personal hero of mine, Susan Sontag. She talks about the relationship of video and photography stating that, “(Photography) is a slice in time and in effect, is more memorable than moving images for example, videos. It fills the gaps in our mind of the past and present.”⁷ These words again remind me of the underlying correspondences between time and water. Here photography is supplying a “porthole” to another location in time.

⁷ Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Picador, 1977. 39.

I love Sontag's quote because it explains how I feel about photography in relation to the current trend in the art world to make videos. Let me first say that video has a strong and stable place when used successfully, but it is my opinion that it is overused and most commonly poorly executed in response to trends. If photography was determined to be my religion, then video would be blasphemy. Personally, I am opposed to using video in my own work, because of my steadfast belief in the power of the still image. I truly believe in the kinetic potential of photography. I believe that the opportunity for the audience to participate in the fabrication of the image and its setting is a major aspect of the strength of images. This experience of filling in the blanks, rather than that of being shown or told the full details, will most likely become more authentic for the viewer.

Two-Dimensional & Three-Dimensional

There is also an interesting fluttering of dimensions with photography. Although the image is flat along with everything contained in its borders, our associations with those objects are three dimensional in our mind. Each time you see a tree in a photo, your mind links it to your understanding of what a tree is describing its texture, its mass, and its scale relative to your own. We are rarely ever able to sever those connections.

The Bridge

In the photographs that I am altering and creating, I am not simply looking for the audience to manifest a story, but rather to involve them in the residue of something they have forgotten they are familiar with. I am attempting to create a bridge with the individual through my work. For a moment, we have the ability to share something no matter how estranged we might seem. I am hoping to translate an emotion that is both communal and individual. I am exploring the similarities between strangers and attempting to identify with them through the still image.

In the book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag writes about the idea of an aura within a photograph. She talks about the aura of the subject being transferred to the image during the act of taking a picture. Searching for that shifted aura, I began taking images and removing their characters. With the hypothesis that the aura of the individual would remain even after their image was gone, I created several large scale, manipulated photographs. In a photograph of two lovers, the test was to find their authentic glaze with only one half of the couple remaining. (Figure 1) Clearly an experiment of the resilience of residue, this was also an attempt to slow the audience.

Slowing of Space

Today many people rush past advertisements, speed through traffic, and side-step strangers on the street. There is a tendency to overlook and ignore what is not “pertinent.” It is the intention of several of my pieces to move slowly into the space occupied by the viewer. I hope to seep into their thoughts because I feel that a slower connection can be a more intimate, more cultivated experience. Because of the pace of individual’s lives and the constant and instant connection that most of the developed world functions within, there is a trend to decline personal connection with strangers. There is a tendency to connect with individuals somewhere other than where the person physical stands. This instant gratification of connection has caused some to loose footing in the moment. A majority of people are separated from ideas of mindfulness and residing in the moment.

In some ways, I think about photography as the strangers on the street that we tend not to interact with. Because of such heavy marketing campaigns, some people have grown to ignore images and have created an apathetic response to photography as art. But I believe in the power of subversion, as well as, that of the photograph.



Figure 1 . . . *The Picnic*, 2010
Photograph on Paper
44" w x 66" h

In an attempt to slow the space that surrounds my work, I strive to create a type of collaboration with the audience. It is a personal artistic challenge to create an experience or phenomenon for the viewer rather than an object. The phenomenon or experience is interesting in several ways. One way that it functions is to remind the viewer of the moment. Another possibility is that audience becomes connected because of their interaction with the piece. Again, I aspire to enable a space where the viewer can make a discovery in their time spent with the work. It is my goal to be subtle, slow and yet persistent. I am attempting to strip the concept down to the essence of the idea.

To alter space and confuse the eye, I began making a mirror that was both translucent and reflective. The idea of the porous nature of our reflections was a priority while working on this piece. While looking, the viewer began to see objects that were behind them in front and vice versa. The solidity of the space became obscured. The documentation of the piece shows my mother and I standing on each side of the mirror. (Figure 2 & 3) This was perhaps one of the most bizarre incidents I have ever experienced. We stood with our eyes in the same location, yet when I blinked the eyes I saw were still. Wrinkles were suddenly more prominent around my eyes and mouth than before and my hair fluxed between my mother's hair and my own. It seemed as though my time had suddenly elapsed and my mother's had rewound. This experience is perhaps the closest I will ever get to looking into my future and seeing a breathing version of myself.



Figure 2 . . . *Subjective*, 2010

Stripped Mirror

20" w x 34" h x 1/8"



Figure 3 . . . *Subjective* (detail), 2010

Stripped Mirror

20" w x 34" h x 1/8"

Section IV: Influences

I have been thinking extensively about the work of several Minimalist artists. Although there are differences between my work and that of the Minimalists, there are also similarities. The focus on the essence and the pairing down of visuals is something that I have spent a great deal of time working through in my duration at graduate school. My work prior to VCU was loaded with visual information that both complimented and complicated the concept. I have made an earnest attempt to strip my work and direct my aesthetic towards the idea of the essence.

Larry Bell is a great example of a Minimalist artist that I have researched. After making the mirror that was partially stripped so as to be both transparent and reflective, I was referred to his work. (Figure 4) To be truthful, I was somewhat disappointed to see his glass boxes, because they were so similar to the idea in my mind of how my altered mirrors would function. But it did lead me to looking at other work made during that same time period, some of which shared a strikingly similar aesthetic to my own.

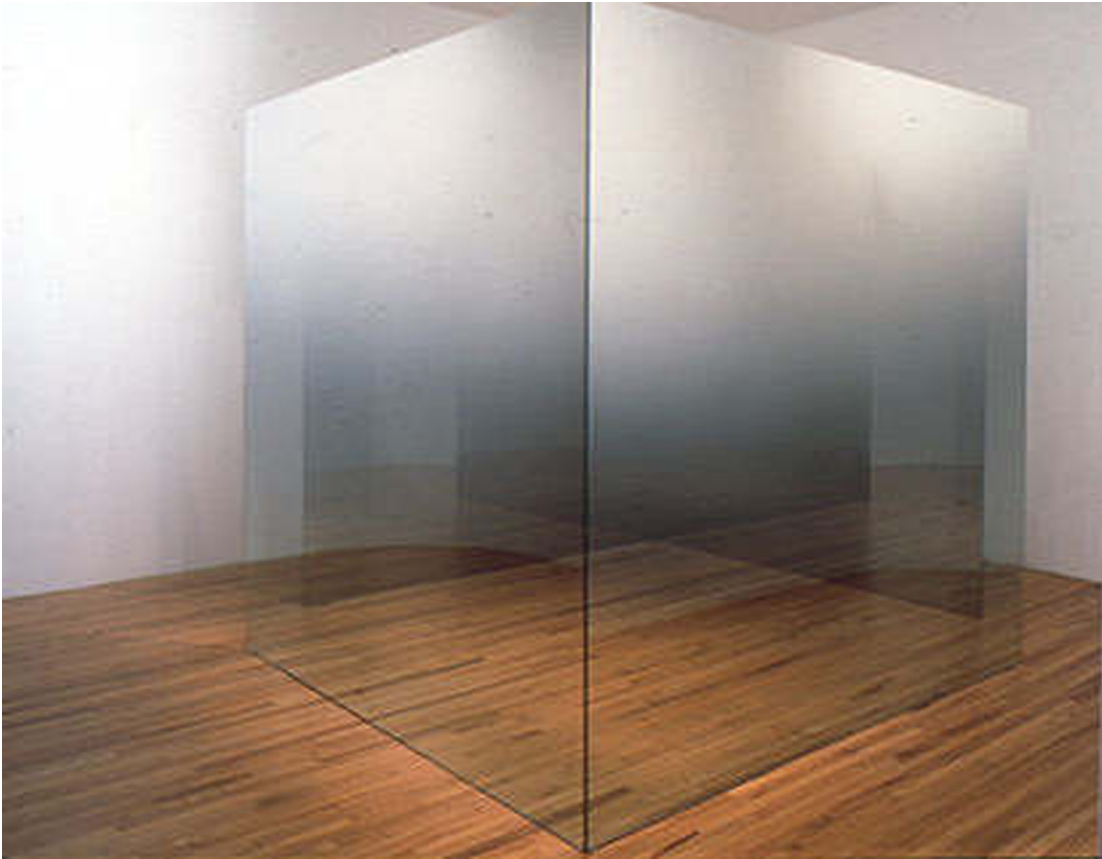


Figure 4 . . . Larry Bell, *Standing Wall*, 1996

.5" coated glass, 4 panels

72" h x 72" w x 72" d

Through researching Larry Bell and Robert Irwin, I discovered the Light and Space Movement based out of the west coast. It is a collection of artists that experiment with the elements of space and light for perceptual purposes. Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, and the recently deceased John McCracken are a few of the artists associated with this movement that have been personal aesthetic and theoretical influences. Although the Light and Space Movement maintains that their work is perception based and not conceptual; I find perception to be their concept. This idea of perception as concept is something that I have been exploring in my own work, although it is threaded with additional concepts.

Several other artists that have influenced me include: Anish Kapoor, Christian Boltanski, Sally Mann, Sophie Calle, Dianne Arbus, Olafur Eliason, Anne Karin-Furunes, and Felix Gonzalex-Torres. Perhaps because of my own history with two-dimensional work, I have found photography and painting to be of great significance to my personal aesthetic.

Although a number of the artists I have mentioned are photographers, use photography, or are painters, I tend to think of some of their work three-dimensionally. Christian Boltanski is an example of someone who works as both a two and three-dimensional artist. His photographs are technically two-dimensional, yet lighting, wiring, and tin boxes fill the space that accompanies them. (Figure 5) He often uses light in a way that is both a way of illuminating the work and situating a mood within the space. I would argue

that even without the additional three-dimensional elements, the photographs still have the potential to command space in the room. The atmosphere that surrounds his work tends to leak and spill into the space around his imagery. I am interested in this shifting between two and three-dimensional work. Boltanski speaks of his work in a fashion that confuses the boundaries of several forms of making.

When I make a large show, I often try to have a beginning and an end, because emotion comes from time. But it's a different kind of time than theatre or cinema. I mean, when you read a book, you have, say, a young girl who is happy on one page, and you turn the page and now she is dying. That quality of emotion comes when you have some kind of a shock. When I make a picture, I try to create different kinds of space, and even different kinds of shock, to have a beginning and to have a sweep of emotion. My work is a little like theatre, but it's also always so different. I'm like a musician, I can play my work and I can play my work better, or worse, depending on the place where I am showing. It's theatre without text, without spectacle. What I wish to do is something between theatre and installation.⁸

Boltanski's work shares similar themes to my own: death and loss. One of his series is of images of Jewish children taken by the Nazis. He uses strong elements of the past and memory and is quoted as saying, "I began to work as an artist when I began to be an adult,

⁸ Sanders, Michael. "Studio Visit: Christian Boltanski." *Tate Magazine* 2, November 2002 Accessed March 10, 2011.

when I understood that my childhood was finished, and was dead. I think we all have somebody who is dead inside of us. A dead child. I remember the Little Christian that is dead inside me.”⁹

This quote reminds me of my own interest in twinning, in siblings, and metaphysics. I am interested in what is missing in his imagery. For Boltanski, the loss is in the history of the figure. I have also been trying to emphasize this historical loss, as well as, a physical loss in my own work.

⁹ Sanders, Michael



Figure 5 . . . Christian Boltanski, *Monument Odessa*, 1990

11 photographs, 3 tin biscuit boxes, 68 light bulbs, glass, and electrical cords

Accumulation

Collecting old objects and discarded mementos has always been a large part of my making process. The act of collecting is a habit and comfort for me. Also, rearranging and combining of objects is the impetus to a chain reaction in my mind. Things talk to me about time, their lives, and the tragedy of being forgotten. Perhaps I am reminding others of their own memories when using old spoons, photographs, or eyeglasses. I believe that these objects imbue a history of the personal and that that history can be translated to the viewer and speak of their past. Everything is relative, and if I give the audience enough kindling, a spark might be ignited in their memory.

Alteration

Experimenting with the idea of physical and emotional loss, I chose an image out of my collection that met my specific criteria. It needed to be an image of water, but one that also contained a mysterious quality. This particular photo does exactly what I wanted because there are several technical errors in the image that give it a sense of ambiguity. The dark stripe on the left is a figure in my mind; so I split the image giving it equal space to that of the woman. (Figure 6) I then separated the photo again in order to activate the landscape and give more room to the white orb in the bottom left corner. The

splitting of the image occurred because after printing the image, I realized the composition wasn't as I had remembered it. The woman was off-center, more toward the left in my memory and I needed to correct that in the actual print. It was perhaps an accident that I was compelled to cut the image, but it makes complete sense to show loss with a void. Perhaps the viewer assumes there is more information that has been removed from the image. In which case, I am interested in that dialog of what is there and what is missing.

This piece represents a milestone in my graduate experience. It proposed a moment in which I had to give up the accomplishments of the piece to further my idea and the success of the work. The independence from fear of failure is something that I gained while working through this image. I intend to keep this idea close to me as a reminder to grow, be open, and fearlessly create.



Figure 6 . . . *Drift*, 2011

Photograph on Paper

65''w x 48''h x 2'' d, installation dimensions of all three pieces

Anne Karin-Furunes is also working with imagery that deals with loss. Her large portraits are actually paintings that she has punched holes into to allow light to penetrate. (Figure 7) Although the holes essentially function as pixels, they also give the image a transient quality. She talks about her work existing in the head of the viewer, which is something that I have been thinking about extensively.

The idea that the actual piece exists in and is made by the viewer is something that has been really intriguing to me. Again, the idea of creating an authentic experience is personally compelling. Inside a wall, the image is lit and shines through the holes of a pair of binoculars. The information label describes the title as "*After Image*", and the material as twenty seconds and light, leaving it up to the viewer to make the piece. In the moment they stop looking, the image is seen in reverse. (Figure 8) I am aware that not all viewers will look at the image and that not all will see it. But I also know this to be true of other works. I am not interested in making work that is quick-witted, but rather slow and composed. The dedication of the viewer is rewarded with a visual phenomenon.



Figure 7 . . . Anne Karin-Furunes, *Unknown from Archive 1*, 2008

Painted and Perforated Canvas

63" h x 63" w



Figure 8 . . . *After Image* (detail), 2011

20 seconds, light

96" h x 48" w, installation dimension

Capturing the Intangible

Exploring reflection in water and focusing on ambiguity, I created a series of glass lenses for my camera. Reflection and fluidity were at the front of my mind. I'm interested in the image of fog as a landscape that could be confused as figures or vice versa. Again, I am not looking for a narrative, but a visual blurring of what defines the borders of both figure and landscape. Robert Irwin talks about a similar challenge in his own work. (Figure 9)

(The challenge) was simply to always try to maximize the energy, the physicality of the painting, and to minimize the imagery. It could all be looked at essentially as turning the entire question upside down: moving away from the literate, conceptual rationale and really reestablishing the inquiry on the perceptual, tactile level. Nobody quite understood that at the time, because they were still thinking in image terms and in terms of literate connotations. When they talked about a painting, they translated it into subject matter, in a way, but it's not only about that. It's about presence, phenomenal presence. And it's hard: if you don't see it, you just don't see it; it just ain't there. You can talk yourself blue in the face to somebody, and if they don't see it, they just don't see it. But once you start seeing it, it has a level of reality exactly the same as the imagery—no more, but no less.

. . . All my work since then has been an exploration of the phenomenal presence.¹⁰

¹⁰ Weschler, Lawrence. *Seeing Is Forgetting The Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin*. Berkeley And Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982. 65-66.



Figure 9 . . . Robert Irwin, *Untitled*, 1969

Acrylic lacquer on formed acrylic plastic, 54 in

Copyright Robert Irwin 1969/Artists Rights Society, New York

Irwin talks about the levels of reality in a way that I connect with on an emotional level. I am also extremely interested in the way that he speaks about painting and the physical space that the elements command. In my mind I bend these thoughts with my ideas of how I functioned as a child. My imagination was unwavering and able to construct unknowns into substance. The capability of adults to remember this dexterity of mind is something I have been questioning. Can we revert, as defined as becoming once again the property of the former owner, to this state of mental and visual flux?

The series of fog studies is an exploration of the reality of reflection, of water, and of condensation. (Figure 10 & 11) I am drawn to the haziness in our eyes and mind to discern when the water transfers into mist and seeps into view. While researching the ideas of fog and the reliability of sight, I came across images of visual representations of seeing through cataracts. They were hazy, smoky, and seem to be fog filled. It appears to be condensation on the eye.

Water is such a full metaphor in my mind, because it is the incentive for all existence. It has the ability to alter states and shift in and out of physicality. Again, I have interested in the confusion of the image and where the viewer situates it, as a landscape or as figures. Water and time hold great connections in my mind because of these parallels.



Figure 10 . . . *Fog Study 2*, 2011

Photograph taken through blown glass lens

40" w x 30" h x 2" d



Figure 11 . . . *Fog Study I*, 2011

Photograph taken through blown glass lens, mounted
30" w x 40" h x 2"

Again, the resemblance of reflection is held in water, photography and glass. Attempting to expound upon the ideas previously discussed about transparency and reflection, along with ideas of physicality, I created a dome glass sphere and mirrored the interior. Hanging in space, the dome reverberates back to the viewer their distance and position in the room. As each variable changes, the image of the individual is warped in compensation. The dome inverts the viewer on the backside, changing their orientation to themselves. Yet beyond the visual phenomenon of the viewer, the dome seems to confuse its own space and shape. In different locations the semicircle completes itself, filling its inner with a volume that is intangible. In my mind, this piece is the intersection of all of my ideas of fact and fiction, time and space, and solidity.

The late John McCracken created works that I feel are essential in nature to some of my own explorations. (Figure 12) The piece, *Magic*, is an interesting example of a reflective surface that is changing the perception of the object as well as its environment. Although this work has an element of camouflage that I am not addressing, the title *Magic* is something that I have given extensive thought. What is magic? Is it simply the confusion of given principals within our understanding? I am willing to expand my ideas on space, time, and density in order to personally confuse my own constructs of these systems. A significant motivation for my making is to attempt to understand intangible relationships and to further confuse their structures in an effort to show their fallibility.



Figure 12 . . . John McCracken, *Magic*, 2008

Stainless Steel

104" h x 14 ½" w x 17" d

Even after years of being preoccupied by ideas of death, memory, and perceptions, I am still unsure of the extent of their definitions, capabilities, and concessions. My artistic practice is a way of attempting to balance on what I know to be an unsteady foundation. Curiosity will continue to be a habit, as well as, that of questioning my assumptions. The objectivity, more accurately the subjectively, of perception will always obscure trust of my senses as I strive to absorb and reflect the world as I know it to be.

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Curriculum Vitae

Courtney Lane Dodd

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Born March 21, 1983 Poplar Bluff, MO

Education

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2011 | Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia Masters in Fine Art, Concentration in Glass |
| 2006–08 | Penland School of Craft, Penland, North Carolina Core Fellowship Program |
| 2005 | Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri Bachelor of Fine Arts, Dual Emphasis: Graphic Design and Illustration, GPA 3.83 |

Honors

Virginia Commonwealth University

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 2009, 2010 | Graduate Teaching Assistant. Fall |
| 2010 | Teaching Assistant to Jack Wax in Denmark |
| 2009–10 | Graduate Artist Association, Treasurer |
| 2009–10 | Task Force Member |

Missouri State University

Magna Cum Laude
Recognition Scholarship
Art & Design Scholarship
Phi Eta Sigma honor fraternity member

Exhibitions

- 2011 *MFA Exhibition*, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, Virginia
- 2010 *Siblings*, Two Person Show, Margaret Harwell, Poplar Bluff, Missouri
GAS Student Show, GAS Conference, Louisville, Kentucky
Whichcraft, VCU Craft/Material Studies Candidacy Show, Richmond, Virginia
All in the Approach, Invitational, Cabarrus Arts Council Gallery, Concord, North Carolina
- 2009 *Alter Ego*, Fine Arts Building Gallery, Richmond, Virginia
Spring Into Arts Festival, Concord, North Carolina
The Big Crafty, Asheville, North Carolina
- 2008 *Reclamation*, Juried, Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts, Fredericksburg, Virginia
Petal Pushers, Juried, Worcester Center for Crafts, Worcester, Massachusetts
- 2007 *Core Show*, Penland School of Crafts, Penland, North Carolina
Contemporaries of the Carolinas, Juried, Fayetteville Museum of Art, Fayetteville, North Carolina
- 2006 *Core Show*, Penland Gallery, Penland, North Carolina
- 2005 *Ceramics, Metals & Jewelry Invitational*, Juried, Student Exhibition Center, Springfield, Missouri
- 2004 *Students in Design Exhibition*, Student Exhibition Center, Springfield, Missouri
- 2003 *Students in Design Exhibition*, Student Exhibition Center, Springfield, Missouri
16th Annual Pictures by the People, Margaret Harwell, Poplar Bluff, Missouri

- 2002 *Students in Design Exhibition*, Student Exhibition Center,
Springfield, Missouri
- 2001 *MSU Foundations Exhibition*, Student Exhibition Center,
Springfield, Missouri

Residencies

- 2012 NES Artist Residency, Skagaströnd, Iceland

Related Work History

- 2010 Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia
Art Foundations Instructor, Craft Project Course, Spring
- 2009 Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia
Craft/Material Studies Instructor, Beginning Glassblowing,
Summer and Fall
- 2009 Kate Boyd, Penland School of Craft, Penland, North Carolina
Penland Annual Auction Assistant, January–August
- 2007–09 Devin Burgess, Penland Artist in Residence, Penland, North Carolina
Assistant Glassblower, December 2007–August 2009
- 2006–08 Penland School of Craft, Penland, North Carolina
Core Fellowship Program, February
- 2004 Springfield Glass Works, Springfield, Missouri
Assistant Glassblower, May–December

Publications

- 2008 *PBS*, “Simple Living with Wanda Urbanska, The Artist Within,” Episode 3
- 2008 *WNC Magazine*, Artist Profile, January–February
- 2005 National Publication: *Creative Convocation*, Premier Issue, September
- 2005–06 National Publication: *CMYK Magazine*, Issue 32, Winter